

## Message Text

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22

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 USSS-00 SY-05 SCCT-01

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07 IO-13 /095 W

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P R 090550Z JUL 76

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4041

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0535

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: EVENTS IN ERITREA

REF: A. ASMARA 0507 (DTG 281310Z JUN 76), B. ASMARA 0508

(DTG 290610Z JUN 76)

1. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVEN ASSASSINATIONS BY INSURGENTS OF EPMG POLICE AND SECURITY PERSONNEL IN MID-WEEK. ON JULY 6, A POLICE OFFICIAL WAS SHOT TO DEATH BY UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS IN THE AREA OF THE CITY ABATTOIR. THE NEXT DAY REBEL ASSASSINS DRESSED IN ETHIOPIAN ARMY UNIFORMS MACHINEGUNNED THREE EPMG SOLDIERS, ONE OF WHOM WAS REPORTEDLY A CAPTAIN INVOLVED IN THE TORTURE AND EXECUTION OF ERITREAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AT NOW INFAMOUS FORMER PALACE IN CENTRAL ASMARA. THE USE BY THE INSURGENTS OF  
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EPMG UNIFORMS HAVE HAVE BEEN AN EFFORT TO CAPITALIZE ON THE

REPORTED DISCORD AMONG, AND WITHIN, VARIOUS BRANCHES OF THE ETHIOPIAN FORCES. THREE OTHER VICTIMS ARE ALLEGED TO BE INVOLVED IN "POLITICAL OPPRESSION" IN ASMARA, AND THEIR DEMISE HAS CAUSED SOME GLEE AMONG ERITREAN RESIDENTS (AN OBVIOUS ERITREAN BIAZ WHICH RENDERS THESE MURDERS MORE PALATABLE). SURPRISINGLY, THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO BE ANY FEAR DISPLAYED BY RESIDENTS ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF REPRISALS ON THE ORDER OF THOSE FOLLOWING THE ASSASSINATION OF COL. BISHU IN APRIL.

2. THERE IS AN UNSETTLING REPORT THAT THE BARATTOLO PLANTATION IN TESSENEY HAS BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED BY INSURGENTS AND THAT FURTHER OPERATIONS MAY BECOME IMPOSSIBLE. IT IS KNOWN THAT THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE BARATTOLO TEXTILE FACTORY IN ASMARA HAS FLOWN TO TESSENEY TO ASSESS THE DAMAGE. PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE IRRIGATION SYSTEM HAS BEEN DAMAGED, SIX TRACTORS DESTROYED AND SEVEN STOLEN. THE PLANTATION HAS BEEN ABLE TO FUNCTION DURING THE YEARS OF THE INSURGENCY PRIMARILY BECAUSE IT WAS A SOURCE OF REVENUE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS AND BECAUSE THE FACTORY IT SUPPLIES IN ASMARA EMPLOYS ALMOST 2500 WORKERS.

3. ON JULY 7, A CONVOY OF 294 TRUCKS LEFT FOR MASSAWA, WHILE AN ADDITIONAL 95 TRUCKS WERE TURNED BACK FOR LACK OF ADEQUATE NUMBERS OF ESCORT TROOPS. THE MOST TRUCKS REPORTEDLY PLANNING TO RETURN TO ASMARA WITH SALT, MOST OF WHICH WILL THEN BE TRANSPORTED TO ADDIS WHERE THE PRICE HAS REPORTEDLY INCREASED TENFOLD IN THE PAST YEAR. THE GRAIN TRANSPORTED FROM MASSAWA LAST WEEK HAS STILL NOT APPEARED IN THE MARKET AND THE RATIONING SITUATION CONTINUES TO PRESENT DIFFICULTIES AND SHORTAGES FOR ASMARA RESIDENTS.

4. COMMENT: THE EVENTS OF LAST WEEKEND AND THIS WEEK APPEAR TO REINFORCE A GROWING REALIZATION THAT THE PEACE INITIATIVES OF EARLY JUNE HAVE COME TO NAUGHT. THE EPMG'S NINE-POINT PROPOSAL IS NO LONGER MENTIONED BY EITHER ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS OR BY ERITREAN PEOPLE. IT IS APPARENT THAT THE INSURGENTS IN THE FIELD BELIEVE THAT THEIR POSITION IS IMPROVING WHILE THAT OF THE ETHIOPIANS APPEARS TO BE DETERIORATING. THE REBELS HAVE ALSO CLEARLY BEEN HEARTENED BY THE OBVIOUS SETBACK TO THE EPMG OF THE FAILURE OF THE "PEASANT'S MARCH". IF THE ATTACK ON THE BARATTOLO PLANTATION PROVES TO BE FATAL TO THEIR OPERATIONS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT INSURGENT CLAIMS THAT THEIR TACTIC IS NOW TO DRIVE ERITREANS  
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FROM THE CITIES INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE MAY HAVE SUBSTANCE (REF B). NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE REBELS HAVE MUCH DESTRUCTION TO ACCOMPLISH BEFORE THIS WOULD BECOME POSSIBLE.  
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## Message Attributes

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